

The Mistakes Of Naaman

Introduction. The story of Naaman is recorded for us in 2 Kings 5:1-14. The latter days of the reign of Israel's king Jehoram were marked by hostilities with the Aramean king Ben-Hadad II. Probably due to Israel's failure to participate in the continued Syro-Assyrian confrontation that marked most of the sixth decade of the ninth century B.C., the Arameans continually chastened the northern kingdom with systematic raids (2 Kings 6:8), culminating in an all-out military excursion into Israel (2 Kings 6:24-7:20).

During the course of one such raid, an Israelite maiden had fallen into the hands of Ben-Hadad's field marshal, Naaman. Although Naaman was a brilliant commanding officer, he suffered from leprosy, a serious and incurable skin disease. On one occasion when Naaman was home from fighting and relations were stabilized somewhat between Damascus and Israel, the Israelite servant girl informed her Aramean master that there was a prophet in Israel who could cure him. When Naaman was advised of such a hope, he spoke to Ben-Hadad who, in turn, sent Naaman with rich gifts and a letter of introduction to Jehoram so that the Syrian (Aramean) general might be healed.

Back under the Old Law, lepers had to remain outside the camp until they were clean (Leviticus 13:46; Numbers 5:1-3). No one wanted to have contact with a leper (Leviticus 13:45). In the spiritual realm, sin defiles us (Titus 1:15). It defiles the "inner man." Isaiah 1:5-6 says that the sinner is "sick." There are many "honorable" people today, but if they are sinners, it spoils it all. The Bible commands a spiritual cleansing (2 Timothy 2:21; James 4:8). The only way we can be saved from sin and death is by obeying Jesus Christ (Matthew 9:10-13; 13:15; Luke 5:29-32).

The tale of Naaman is one with which we can examine ourselves. Let's look at the road that Naaman took to cleanse himself. It is a road that was fraught with mistakes, but a road that enlightens our own path.

I. ***Naaman Went To The Wrong Party***

- A. The Jewish maid in Naaman's home told her mistress that there was a "prophet" in Israel who could heal Naaman of his leprosy. But at the suggestion of the king of Syria, Naaman went to the "king" of Israel. This very well may have been customary, but the maid said nothing about the king of Israel being able to heal anyone.
- B. Many sinners still go to the wrong party. Some may go to a "priest" or a "pastor." Some still want to go to the Old Law, but

the answer is not there either. It is not right to go back to the thief on the cross and learn what to do to be saved now (Luke 23:43).

- C. Christ is our only mediator (1 Timothy 2:5-6). God is the one whom we go to in order to have salvation. Hebrews 5:5-10 tells us that Jesus is now the author of eternal salvation. Acts 2:38 tells us that we should be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ! This gives us the forgiveness of sins. This is what saves us.

II. ***Naaman Wanted To Buy The Blessing***

- A. Naaman brought ten talents of silver, six thousand pieces of gold and ten changes of raiment to the one who would heal him. But God cannot be bribed. Simon the Sorcerer tried to gain the gift of God the same way (Acts 8:13-14).
- B. We cannot substitute money for personal purity and holiness to God (2 Corinthians 7:1). No one can hire another person to live the Christian life for them; it is a life that must be sustained only by you.
- C. While Naaman could not buy a cure for leprosy, he could dip seven times in the Jordan river and be cured by God. Naaman was cured because of his obedience, not by his morality or good deeds. Naaman's faith had to be tested.

III. ***Naaman Thought Dipping Was Too Simple***

- A. Naaman had a fixed opinion as to how he would be healed by the man of God. Sometimes we are the same way. We think salvation should proceed a certain way, and if it does not, we feel cheated.
- B. Naaman was a very lucky man to have such genuinely interested servants. They gently rebuked him for his rejection of Elisha's plan. They said, "My father, had the prophet told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it?" But God's plan was too simple for him.
- C. You know, a lot of people reject the gospel plan because it is too simple! People feel that there is not enough noise and show, not enough mystery or mysticism. The simple command of the gospel to "wash and be clean" is still a "stumbling-block" and "foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:26). Man's part has always been simple.
- D. Whatever mystery there is in the plan is over on the Lord's side, and man need not worry about the Lord's part, but should simply "trust and obey" like the song says. Faith takes God at His word, regardless of how simple the conditions may be (2 Corinthians 5:7).

IV. ***Naaman Thought The Power Was In The Water***

- A. Naaman wanted to go to rivers in the land of Damascus because he thought the rivers were better. He thought the power was in the water. God is the one who saves, but it is only after baptism (1 Peter 3:21). Many people think the power is in the water, but the power of salvation is in the gospel (Romans 1:16).
- B. The effectiveness of baptism is not in the water, but in the manifestation of faith and obedience which it implies (Romans 6:17). It is the manifestation of an obedient and trustful conscience (1 Peter 3:21).
- C. For example, we do not baptize infants, which is evidence that we do not teach water salvation. If there is any effectiveness in infant baptism, it must be in the water. One thing is sure -- it cannot be in the condition of the child's heart, because the child does not even know what is taking place.
- D. The New Testament authorizes us to baptize those who are old enough to believe and repent (Acts 2:38; Acts 16:31-33; Mark 16:16).

V. ***Naaman Wanted To Substitute The Rivers***

- A. Naaman wanted to substitute the Abanah and Pharpar Rivers, but God told him the Jordan River. How common it is for God and man to differ in their judgments! To dip in other waters would not be obedience. God accepts no substitutes. The Bible says there is only one way to God (Ephesians 4:4-6).
- B. The Bible says we are to be buried in baptism (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12). But some want to sprinkle, pour, etc. The Bible says that believers were baptized (Acts 8:12; 18:8). But some want to baptize infants and even the dead! The Lord built His church -- built it like he wanted it -- but men want to substitute some denomination (Matthew 16:18; Romans 16:16).
- C. The Bible tells us that the work of the church is that of teaching, edification and care for the saints. But the "religious world" wants to substitute human institutions and politics to try to get the job done.
- D. The Bible tells us that we should wear the name Christian (1 Peter 4:16; Acts 11:26). But some want to wear all names under the sun and consider themselves "children of God." We could go on and on.

Conclusion. Make no mistake. Naaman was not healed until he corrected all of his mistakes. Naaman was not cleansed after he dipped six times. God said seven times. Obedience is the essential element

(Deuteronomy 5:29; James 1:25; 2:14, 20-26; Revelation 22:14). God gives us the gospel plan, but He does not accept anything but His plan (Galatians 1:6-9; Jude 3; Ephesians 4:5)!

Don't make the mistakes of Naaman. God's word is sure. In Ezekiel 12:25, the people were growing skeptical at Ezekiel's message because none of the prophesied events had happened, but God assured him that the calamity would occur. Trust God at His word, for it will never pass away (Luke 21:33).